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THE SITUATION IN BURUNDI

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-first year

Letter dated 20 June 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a declaration by the Presidency of the European Union on the Great Lakes region and in particular on Burundi, issued on 20 June 1996 (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under item 43 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) F. Paolo FULCI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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ANNEX

[Original: English and French]

Declaration by the Presidency of the European Union on the Great Lakes region and in particular on Burundi

Rome, 20 June 1996 - Italy, as President of the European Union, after consultation among partners, has issued the following declaration:

The European Union's objectives and priorities with regard to the Great Lakes region are to secure peace, to consolidate the process of national reconciliation in the countries concerned, to facilitate a return to normal democratic life, in particular by restoring the rule of law, and to encourage economic and social recovery.

Aware as it is of the close links between the various political, economic and humanitarian problems in the region and of the serious risk of destabilization which remains, the European Union would emphasize the need for a comprehensive approach and a regional dimension in the search for lasting solutions to the crisis. It considers that the presence of over a million and a half refugees in the region constitutes a major factor of destabilization and that their return to their countries of origin in safety and with dignity is essential if peace is to be restored.

It appeals to the heads of State who signed the Cairo and Tunis Declarations to comply with the undertakings they gave, so as in particular to stop trafficking in arms and the training of the various militia and armed groups which serve only to increase insecurity in the region. It would point to United Nations resolution 1053 (1996) in this regard and also the measures in the plan of action adopted by the Bujumbura Conference (12 to 17 February 1995) for the prevention of subversive activities in countries of asylum. The European Union also emphasizes the importance of deploying United Nations observers at airports and at frontiers.

The European Union is increasingly concerned at the deteriorating political and human rights situation in Burundi and at the increase in violence. The persistent clashes, spreading over different parts of the country, and the killings and atrocities committed against the civilian population could well involve Burundi in a spiral of permanent conflict.

The European Union strongly condemns all recourse to violence, which will never bring about a solution to the country's problems, and appeals to all the factions in the country to begin negotiating a resolution of their differences and to agree on an immediate, general cessation of violence. It supports the initiatives taken by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to restore peace, as well as former President Nyerere's current efforts in this area. It fervently hopes that the talks taking place will result in a national dialogue open to all factions within the country. It also expresses its support for the ongoing efforts made by various bodies and eminent figures such as former Presidents Carter and Toure and Archbishop Tutu.

The European Union would point out that it too has taken initiatives aimed at resolving the crisis and recently appointed a special envoy for the Great Lakes region, Mr. Aldo Ajello, to assist the current efforts of the United Nations, OAU and other bodies and individuals and specifically to lend support to the organization of a regional conference under the joint aegis of the United Nations and OAU to examine and resolve the deep-rooted causes of the crisis. The European Union remains convinced that such a conference must be convened as soon as possible.

The European Union reiterates that it is prepared to assist with specific measures to promote peace and reconciliation in Burundi, in particular the organization of a national dialogue, support for action to promote human rights and the restoring of the rule of law. It is furthermore willing to continue funding the presence of OAU observers and United Nations human rights observers in the country. It is also prepared to help with the economic and social recovery of Burundi as soon as political and security conditions allow rehabilitation programmes to be set up in the country.